



ON THE RIGHT TRACK

1ST BATTALION 50TH INFANTRY MECHANIZED

REUNION 2001 = BUSINESS, FUN, BROTHERHOOD

From the Editors - Incoming & Outgoing



For those of you who do not know me, my name is Robert Melendez and I was a medic in D Company, 4th Platoon from January 1968 through April 1968. I was transferred to A Company in early May 1968 after they lost the 2 Platoons in the May 5th ambush. I rotated back to the "world" in December, 1968.

Let me begin by thanking John Topper and Dick Guthrie for allowing me the opportunity to be the Editor of our Association's Newsletter. And though it's been said by many of you already, I want to thank Ken Riley for establishing this Association. If you reflect for a moment, I think you'll agree that the Association is really a vehicle for our own individual healing. In a sense, all of the phone calls back and forth, the e-mails through our PCs and all of the discussions at the Kansas City/Las Vegas reunions are also vehicles which help our healing. So, if you attended one of the reunions, you'll know what I mean about the healing. You only had to listen to the stories, the laughter and maybe some of the tears to know that the guys really unburdened and released many tightly-held memories.

Let me close my introduction by saying two things: First, please feel free to offer any anecdote, memory, picture or story about our time together back in Binh Dinh province; no matter how insignificant you might think it may be, your contribution to the newsletter will cause other brothers to remember similar events and that helps the healing process. Second, I urge you all to continue to reach out to some of our comrades who are not part of the association; talk with them, ask them to be a part of us and share their memories and stories with us so that the healing will continue. They will benefit from this sharing and the Association will benefit through their participation.

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FROM KEN RILEY

The year 2001 was one of exceptional growth for the Association. Our membership has increased by more than twenty-five and many new programs are being developed to increase this number. The newly elected officers of the board are available to listen to all requests and respond promptly. Our reunion was a smashing success, with newer members meeting the "old-timers", and re-igniting old friendships, while at the same time creating new friendships. We are working toward increasing membership and to also provide an even better newsletter for our membership than previously. Our historian, James Shepherd, has provided invaluable historical information on the Association and is as we speak, working on filling in the missing spaces with even more. Our reunion committee is working feverishly to establish contact with those people in the area of our next location and to get a commitment on rooms, transportation, tours, and so forth. Additional information on their achievements will be published in later newsletters. The fund-raising committee will be investigating the possibility of another "Cow-Pie" Raffle to begin later this year to finance the majority of our upcoming reunion, to enable as many as possible to attend the next reunion. With membership over 250 members as of today, we are shooting to see close to one hundred fellows at the next reunion. As I look back over the past five or six years the Association has existed, I notice many changes which occurred, and all of them for the betterment of the Association. I wish to thank all of those who have helped in any capacity to make this one of the best Associations in the States. I also want to thank all those past and present officers for taking on a mighty task which now lies before them. It has been a pleasure to be the editor of the newsletter, but now I see the need for some fresh, "new" blood to continue to fulfill our desire of providing you with the latest up-to-date information that becomes available.

Press on Ichiban! Play the Game!

SOME THOUGHTS FROM CAP'N

by Dick Guthrie



Friends: I am writing a last column to thank you for the privilege you gave me in Kansas City a year and a half ago. Naming me president let me serve you and in a small way, return the service you each gave to our country over thirty years ago. I think everyone would agree the Las Vegas reunion was a great success. It enabled us again to come together and lend support as each one sorts through the meaning of his experiences from back then. It is hard to isolate which aspects of the reunion were highlights. For me, the thrills began with meeting old friends in Harrah's lobby before I had even checked in. Some of us had not seen each other in over thirty two years. The Sunday night supper was a dignified gathering, with a fine setting, space to circulate and mix with old friends and a chance to welcome the newcomers to our association. The color guard posted our Star Spangled Banner with precision and dignity. We got the Association's business conducted fairly expeditiously. We paid tribute formally to our founder, Ken Riley. At the gathering in the hospitality room afterwards there was interest in the October return trip to Binh Dinh Province. Monday night's dinner at the VFW was more informal, and gave us a terrific opportunity to circulate, renew old ties some more, and make new ones.

Love and mutual support were plentiful there. Tuesday's visit to Nellis Air Force Base and the exposure to young people who today carry the burden of our nation's defenses gave a powerful reminder of the emotions and concerns we all shared in the 1960's when fate first brought us together. Without a doubt, the visit to the Thunderbird's facility awakened tremendous national pride. You could almost cut the patriotism with a knife. I found myself feeling relieved that our country is still able to find such motivated people, and keep them in uniform despite the low pay and continuing hardships that plague all the services today. I renewed my commitment to do whatever I can to ensure our nation takes care of our service men and women better than it has in the past. All of this is reason enough to be grateful for the time, effort and expense sacrificed to make the reunion come about; but for me, the real highlight was on that Tuesday bus trip from the air base back to our hotel. By then we had been together for a couple of days and had worked through the natural awkwardness. So fellows easily slipped into telling stories from the times in Vietnam. A few of the accounts were humorous, often-told yarns about the foibles of service life. But most of the stories were serious ones, and we heard unburdening as well as mutual support that was touching beyond words. These were reminiscences we each have carried and yearned to share for over three decades but may never

have felt safe doing so. It occurred to me that what our association is really about was there, in that spontaneous session in a bus careening down the freeway. Our true purpose is to provide ways for our members to come together in circumstances where we can feel safe to revisit our lost youth, lost innocence, lost brothers. This is a forum where we can air our pent up fears and regrets, resume our mourning process and where we can sing at the top of our lungs the bravery of our heroes—all in a supportive, healing environment. And once the process is underway, we can keep it going through continued contacts, between reunions. The newsletter, the web site and the e-mail all contribute. So thanks to our founder Ken Riley, for making all this possible. Thanks to you for letting me be president for a term. I feel we made progress, but there is more we can do. The good news is that we elected John Topper, the best-suited person I know for president, and he is backed by the strongest board yet. I urge you to give our new board your full support. I'll see some of you in October when we return to Vietnam, and others at the next reunion. Meanwhile, keep the communications going with each other, and help your brothers in every way you can. Give them a call, post a message on the web site, write a piece to share in this newsletter. Until we meet again, stay of the skyline and keep your "drive on rag" at the ready!



FROM THE TC HATCH

John Topper

Many thanks to all who made the reunion in Las Vegas a great success. I am greatly honored to have been chosen to replace Dick Guthrie at the helm of this amazing organization. What a great bunch of people are Ichibaners! The Association, thanks to Ken and Dick, is in great shape and I see no reason to "fix" anything. We elected a new slate of officers and appointed some standing committees and I am confident in their individual and collective abilities to make things

happen in a professional manner that will continue to reflect favorably on the Association. There is one plea I would like to make and that is this: a lot of commitments were made to Ken Riley for various functions at the reunion for which he never received payment. That includes meals, registration, the bus tour of Nellis AFB and perhaps some others. If you gave him your name and didn't pay, please do so. Even if you didn't participate in the meal or the event, the Association, because of your commitment, had to pay for it. That is fundamentally unfair to the rest of the

members because it is their money being squandered. That is somewhat akin to leaving your wounded buddy on the battlefield and none of us want that stigma attached to our name. We do not intend to publish the names of those who owe the Association money, nor will it be mentioned again in this column, but you know if you owe the money and it is time to do the honorable thing. Again, thanks for your confidence in me and I look forward to a memorable tour as your president. I am open to any suggestion any member has—please let me know your thoughts.

And the Winner Is.....

The winning tickets on the 50-50 drawings for Sunday and Monday evening are as follows:

SUNDAY 3/11/01 50-50 ticket number (light Blue) winning # is: **407488** (Note: The \$106.00 prize was claimed and the fellow has

made me promise not to reveal his name, but he donated the winnings back to the Association. I thank him very much for his donation. It helped brother!)

MONDAY, 3/12/01 50-50 ticket number (also light blue) winning # is: **407851** The ticket was claimed and the \$132.00 was paid out. I also had a lady donate \$100.00 to our association and I am very grateful for that. (one of our "honorary "members) but I am not to reveal her name, so I will not tell you she is from the East Coast, nor will I say that she has volunteered to be our "Memorial Book" chairman. Thanks so much "anonymous person".

CHAPLIN'S

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R

Toby
Jordan

"...most of all I think what is becoming more apparent is the healing process that is taking place...."

Well another reunion has come and gone. Las Vegas proved to be a place of lights and glitter as billed. So first let me take a moment to thank Ken for all his

hard work and many headaches he went through to make the reunion a success. And also many thanks to the volunteers who gave up some of their time to help Ken and Lawanda in Vegas. Again this year old friendships were renewed, some old stories traded. But most of all I think what is becoming more apparent is the healing process that is taking place among the attendees every time we meet. Several of the men I talked to told me they were reluctant about attending the reunion. They thought an absence from the reunion was the best way to heal and handle the years. But in reality this was only forming a scar in the life of that individual. They thought that what was taking place at the reunions served no purpose; it was like living in the past. But conversation, laughter, and a few tears are the real antidote that we need to truly begin the healing process. So with this thought in mind we should all endeavor to reach our fellow veterans and invite them to become part of our 1/50 Association and share the healing process together.

God Bless, I'll keep you in my prayers.

WHO WAS THERE?

Attendees of Reunion 2001

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-----|---------------------|
| 1. Allmendinger, Herman | 30. | Juliano, Anthony J. |
| 2. Blankenship, Thomas | 31. | Knepp, Tom |
| 3. Blochberger, John | 32. | McAlear, Tom |
| 4. Bloomquist, Harry | 33. | Melendez, Robert |
| 5. Breseman, Wilber | 34. | Miller, Neil |
| 6. Burch, Roger A. | 35. | Nichols, John |
| 7. Curtis, Lawrence | 36. | Noble, Jack |
| 8. Daniels, James | 37. | Oliphant, Stephen |
| 9. Davidson, Ronald | 38. | Pierce, Parker |
| 10. Deal, Michael | 39. | Ponds Jr., Otis D. |
| 11. Dresher, Elliott | 40. | Provencher, Ronald |
| 12. Dulany, Joseph P. | 41. | Rainwater, Don |
| 13. Edge, James | 42. | Randall, Herbert |
| 14. Edwards, James L. | 43. | Riley, Kenneth G. |
| 15. Ehrlich, Paul W. | 44. | Romano, Frank |
| 16. Ewing, Joe | 45. | Roth, Russ |
| 17. Felder, Jeff | 46. | Segars, James |
| 18. Fischer Jr., Edward | 47. | Smith, Randolph |
| 19. Frisbie, Louis | 48. | Sourwine, Darrel A. |
| 20. Gage, Aaron | 49. | Tepen, Dennis |
| 21. Gailitis, Vilnis | 50. | Thelen, Jon M. |
| 22. Gallant, Leon S. | 51. | Topper, John |
| 23. Gallo, David | 52. | Torres, Joe S. |
| 24. Gold, Robert J. | 53. | Valasek, Melvin J. |
| 25. Grubb, Gladys A. | 54. | Walulek, Stanley |
| 26. Guthrie, Richard | 55. | Werner, Richard F. |
| 27. Hamon, Toby | 56. | Wilson, Harry |
| 28. Hawkins, Harley | 57. | Woodall, James |
| 29. Jordan, Toby | | |



Guess 'Who!
Our very own
Dick Guthrie.

FROM THE TREASURER'S DESK . . .

New members will be sent a minimum of One (1) year's back issues of On the Right Track, our Association Newsletter, and the latest updated addition to the Directory. Because of rising costs in printing, postage, and supplies, the old policy of sending all back issues cannot be followed anymore. If anyone wishes Back Issues of the Association Newsletter, please inform the Editor of which issues you want. Costs will be \$1.00 per issue ordered, plus \$.55 for postage. I wish there was a way around this, but due to rising costs we can no longer afford this generous policy. The following list indicates which past issues are available.



- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. December 2000 | 11. August 1998 |
| 2. September 2000 | 12. June 1998 |
| 3. June 2000 | 13. March 1998 |
| 4. March 2000 | 14. Jan. 1998 |
| 5. October 1999 | 15. December 1997 |
| 6. August 1999 | 16. October 1997 |
| 7. April 1999 | 17. September 1997 |
| 8. March 1999 | 18. June 1997 |
| 9. December 1998 | 19. March 1997 |
| 10. October 1998 | 20. December 1996 |

NEW POLICY FOR BACK DUES

The following Policy will be implemented by the Association, effective 1 June 2001. Due to rising printing and postal costs, the following will occur:

Any member in arrears on dues for One (1) Year will be sent the Association Directory each year, and information on Reunion only, until back dues are paid. Once reinstated, current issues of all Newsletters will be forwarded.

Any member in arrears on dues for Two (2) Years, will be sent Association Directory once each year only, until back dues are paid. Once reinstated, current issues of all Newsletters will be forwarded.

Any member in arrears on dues Three (3) Year or more, will be moved to our Inactive Roster and will receive a short letter at the beginning of each year, with an application to rejoin the Association. Those on Inactive Roster will receive no information on the Reunion, nor any updated Directory until all back dues have been satisfactorily paid to Secretary/Treasurer.

REPORT OF MEMBERSHIP STATUS

As of 30 March 2001; the following information is known:

Twelve (12) members have not paid their dues for 1998, 1999, 2000, and now 2001 is due.

Twenty (20) members have not paid their dues for the year 1999 or 2000.

Sixty (60) members have not paid their dues for the year 2000.

Eighty-nine (89) members still owe for the year 2001.

Gentlemen: Any Association needs donations, dues, or whatever you wish to call it to survive. Those few who have continuously supported to the Association cannot be expected to carry the entire burden. Please remit your dues at this time so the Association can get back On Track.

NO DUES - NO DIRECTORY

With the December Newsletter, we will send out an Updated, Revised Directory of all members contacted thus far from the battalion. This Directory will be sent to those who are currently paid up for the year 2002. This would include all Life members also. Check your envelope this newsletter came in to see if it has the number 2002 or Life after your name. If it has 2001 or earlier on the envelope after your name, you will not be receiving the Directory this year.

ELECTION RESULTS

Elections were held during Sunday Dinner, General Membership Meeting at the Las Vegas Reunion, on 11 March 2001. The following officers were nominated and elected to the following positions for a Two (2) year term, starting immediately for the year, 2001 to 2003:

President: John Topper

51 Eagle Road
Riverton WY 82501
(307) 856-0178
jt@wyoming.com

Vice President: Randolph Smith

717 East third Street
Seymour IN 47274
(812) 522-6832
smittys@hsonline.net

Chaplain: Toby Jordan

P O Box 105
Gideon MO 63848-0105
(573) 448-3707
ljordan@sheltonbbs.com

Historian: James Sheppard

228 East Arbutus Avenue
Absecon NJ 08201
(609) 652-6736
kiss-ac@juno.com

Secretary: Gary Quint

438 Fairway Lane
Kirkwood MO 63122
(314) 965-0636
kmg@mo.net

Treasurer: Kenneth G Riley

200 Georgetown Court
Hanover PA 17331
(717) 632-7604
ichiban@blazenet.net

REUNION PIX



MORE TO COME IN FUTURE ISSUES
If you have reunion photos to share, please contact the newsletter staff.

